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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 YAOUNDE 000993

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DEPT FOR AF/C
LONDON AND PARIS FOR AFRICA ACTION OFFICERS
EUCOM FOR J5-1 AFRICA DIVISION AND POLAD YATES

E.O. 12958: DECL: 08/07/2017
TAGS: PGOV PREL KCOR EAID CM
SUBJECT: CAMEROON ELECTIONS AREN'T OVER UNTIL THE SUPREME
COURT SINGS

REF: YAOUNDE 951

Classified By: Poloff Tad Brown for reasons 1.4 b and d.

¶1. (SBU) Summary. More than two weeks after the July 22 parliamentary and municipal polls, the official ballot count is complete. The results will not be released, however, until the Supreme Court has rendered decisions on 103 complaints filed by various political parties. Many observers speculate that the final, "official" count will reflect slightly smaller margins of victory for the ruling CPDM party and that the Supreme Court will call for re-run elections in a few hotly contested constituencies. These moves will help reduce the damage done to the credibility of Cameroon's democratic process by the government's conduct of the July 22 elections. We believe the driving force, however, is more likely CPDM embarrassment at overreaching for a massive victory than a genuine upsurge of democratic principles. In any event, the elections will continue to represent a missed opportunity for the development of democratic processes in Cameroon. End summary.

The Votes Are Counted

¶2. (U) Charged with conducting the official, final tabulation of the election returns, the National Commission for the General Vote Count completed its work in an all-night session, passing the results to the Supreme Court on Saturday, August 4. According to the Constitution, the Supreme Court (sitting in for the Constitutional Court, which has not yet been created) is required to announce the final results by August 11, 20 days after the conclusion of the elections.

But Will the Counted Votes Count?

¶3. (U) Before it can announce the results, however, the Supreme Court needs to pass judgment on each of the 103 complaints filed by political parties -- mostly opposition parties, but the CPDM also filed four complaints -- to contest the conduct and results of the election. Speculation in the press and among Embassy contacts suggests that the Supreme Court will demand a re-run of the elections in a few constituencies, likely to include Wouri (encompassing Douala, the economic capital), Nyong and Kelle (Center Province) and Mayo Tsanaga (Far North Province). New elections in these three areas might result in gains for the Social Democratic Front (SDF), the People's Union of Cameroon (UPC) and the National Union for Democracy and Progress (UNDP), respectively, and concomitant losses for the CPDM.

The Kodock Sideshow

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14. (C) Nyong and Kelle are traditional strongholds of the UPC, whose leader, Augustin Kodock, joined the government during the last elections, landing himself the powerful State Ministry for Planning and Development. As the election results currently stand, the UPC has no seats in Parliament, leaving open the possibility that Kodock, who has long been a fixture in Biya's governments for 15 years, would be left out of the next cabinet. Kodock is reportedly indignant at the prospect and is convinced that CPDM leaders orchestrated the UPC's defeat without the knowledge of President Biya, according to a July 26 conversation between Emboff and a UPC leader. Kodock has circulated among diplomatic missions in Yaounde a "confidential" letter he sent to President Biya in late July, accusing Prime Minister Inoni of mismanaging government and marginalizing Kodock's ministry.

Comment: Revisions are Welcome, but Not Sufficient

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15. (C) Congruent with earlier indications (reftel) that some CPDM leaders felt the party had overplayed its hand in claiming such an overwhelming victory in the legislative elections, it now appears that the CPDM's dominance of the Parliament will be trimmed by a few seats. Given the tremendous amount of power vested in the Presidency vis-a-vis the Supreme Court, MINADT, and other arms of government, if the CPDM is being dealt setbacks, it is with the tacit assent, if not on explicit orders, of senior officials in both the Presidency and CPDM. Although these moves will serve to deflate some criticism of the July 22 elections, the credibility of the electoral process remains damaged. End

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comment.
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